

Story 1994 (1992 Tape 9)

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late 30s

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A Bektaşî's¹ Belated Acceptance of Divine Will

The first time a Bektaşî came upon a swarm of cockroaches, he was disgusted by them. “Alas, Allah,” he said, “why did You create such dirty creatures? There was no reason for their existence! They do nothing helpful, but instead live in a filthy place and become a nuisance to mankind!”

Not long after that, this Bektaşî grew ill. A doctor examined him and said, “The only thing that will cure your present condition is a

¹Member of a dervish order of that same name, founded by Hacı Bektaş Veli (d. 1516). The Bektaşî dervishes are often said to be Shi'ite more than Sunnite. Thus their religious position is equivocal in predominantly Sunnite Turkey. Throughout their history they have often been deeply involved in Turkish politics. They had a serious setback in 1826 when the Janissary Corps, with which they were allied, was destroyed. Along with other dervish orders, they were outlawed during the Kemalist Reforms of the 1920s. It was estimated that there were still 30,000 Bektaşîs in Turkey in 1950.

As a folk type the Bektaşî is cynical in attitude and frequently irreverent in behavior. The Bektaşî often drinks alcohol, refuses to fast, scoffs at orthodox Muslim clergymen, and is critical of the Deity. Despite his outrageousness, he is enjoyed, perhaps even admired secretly by Turkish audiences.

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meal of cockroaches. You must eat forty cockroaches.” Like it or not, the Bektaşî decided that he had better follow the doctor’s direction.

Some time later when the Bektaşî was on a voyage, a storm arose. The wind blew so hard that the ship was rolling back and forth helplessly in great waves. Some passengers cried; some screamed; others grew so sick that they began vomiting. In the meantime the Bektaşî was smiling as he walked about the deck singing.

Seeing this, one of the other passengers shouted, “Hey, Bektaşî! Many of us are sick, and some of us may die in this storm. How is it that you can still smile and sing in the midst of this situation?”

The Bektaşî answered, “I no longer question the ways of Allah. Once when I did so, He made me eat forty cockroaches. I do not interfere with His work.”